

**AMERICAN MOVIE TITLE TRANSLATION AND  
FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE: A ROMANIAN-FRENCH  
COMPARISON<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

How many times have we decided to watch a movie simply because its title caught our attention? A film's title does much more than name the story; it sets the mood, offers a glimpse into the plot or central concept, and often provides a memorable tagline. At the same time, it works as a marketing tool, much like the poster, trailer, or promotional campaign. Because films are often released at the intersection of different cultural moments and audiences, crafting the right title has become an art form in itself. This study explores how American movie titles are translated into Romanian and French, examining the linguistic, cultural, and promotional strategies that shape their adaptation. Drawing on Nida's (1964, 1986) theory of formal and dynamic equivalence, as refined by He's (2025) model of functional equivalence, the analysis applies four evaluative parameters: informational, expressive, aesthetic, and promotional. The selected corpus includes twelve American film titles, followed by their Romanian and French translation. Each translation is

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then examined at both the semantic and pragmatic levels to determine how meaning, emotion, and marketing appeal are negotiated across languages. The findings reveal clear differences between the two translation cultures. These tendencies depict each country's cinematic identity: Romania's emphasis on realism and communicative clarity versus France's combination of marketable skills and international orientation.

**Keywords:** film title; title translation; functional equivalence; semantics and pragmatics; Romanian and French cinema.

### **1. Introduction**

Audiovisual translation (AVT) plays an important role in helping people around the world to understand and enjoy movies, TV shows, and other media produced in different languages. It involves the rendition of screenplays from one language to another, safeguarding the story, emotion, and cultural meaning in a way that is relatable to new audiences. Streaming platforms require titles that function well in digital environments, meaning they must be instantly understandable, catchy, and compatible with various screen sizes. Consequently, translators' decision is fundamental for the box office success.

The title of a movie is among the first pieces of information presented to potential viewers, offering clues about the film while also sparking curiosity. In doing so, it can prompt audiences to seek further details and ultimately influence their viewing choices. In this respect, a five-year study of the South Korean movie market revealed that titles containing information about a film's genre or storyline significantly influence box office performance. In particular, the study found that under-promoted films achieve higher revenues when their titles are more informative (Bae & Kim, 2019).

Malur (2022, p. 1) argues that a film title is far more than a simple label, because it represents a complex linguistic and semiotic construct. The title encapsulates layers of meaning that relate to the film's narrative, emotional tone, and symbolic world. In this sense, titles embody semantic multidimensionality, combining literal, figurative, and cultural associations. This view

supports the idea that film titles should be studied not only as marketing tools but also as linguistic artefacts that convey semantic and pragmatic information.

Film titles, as recent scholars have argued, are also critical elements of cinematic discourse that deserve attention within film studies. They constitute the audience's first point of contact with a film, often preceding its release and shaping preliminary expectations. In this sense, titles operate as paratexts, perceived as interpretive thresholds that mediate access to the film's diegetic world. Some viewers engage with this threshold and proceed to watch the film, while others may recognize the title without entering the narrative space it represents (Holobut, Rapacz & Stelmach, 2024, p. 134).

Because of this duality, film titles occupy a hybrid position: they are at once integral and external to the filmic text (Holobut, Rapacz & Stelmach, 2024, p. 134). Within the cinematic experience, the title, especially as part of the opening sequence, contributes to the film's thematic and aesthetic construction. Yet beyond the screen, it acquires autonomy, circulating independently in promotional materials, media discourse, and cultural memory. This liminal status grants titles both artistic and historical significance, positioning them as sites of interpretation and identity formation within film culture.

## **2. Literature Review: Formal and Dynamic Equivalence in Translation**

A formal-equivalence type of translation is fundamentally source-oriented, meaning that it seeks to preserve both the form and the content of the original message as faithfully as possible. According to Nida (1964, pp. 134-135) Such translations attempt to reproduce specific formal elements, including grammatical units, consistency in word usage and meaning within the source text. In addition, it makes an effort to preserve formal markers such as punctuation, paragraph divisions, and even poetic indentation. In many cases, this practice is carried to extremes, with the final result consisting of strings of text that are essentially meaningless. We may affirm that formal equivalence

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is, in many respects, comparable to literal translation. And we know that word-for-word translation is, more often than not, detrimental to the fluency and naturalness of the target language.

That is why, unlike formal-equivalence translations, dynamic-equivalence translations place their emphasis on the effect they produce on the reader. The aim is not strict fidelity to form, but rather to evoke in the target audience a response comparable to that of the original audience. In this sense, a dynamic-equivalence is what a bilingual and bicultural speaker might recognize as entirely natural. Nevertheless, this type of translation is not a paraphrase or a free adaptation, and its legitimacy depends on transmitting the meaning and intention of the original text (Nida, 1964, p. 136).

In *From One Language to Another* (1986), de Ward and Nida introduced the term “functional equivalence” for the first time. This concept preserved the core of Nida’s earlier theory of dynamic equivalence, while clarifying and refining its scope. The “function” in functional equivalence refers to differences in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse that nonetheless serve the same or a similar communicative purpose.

Christiane Nord (1995, p. 264) proposed that translation should also account for the multiple roles a text performs within its communicative situation. Applied to titles and headings, these roles can be understood through six principal functions: (1) “the distinctive function”, which differentiates one film from another; (2) “the metatextual function”, which establishes the title as belonging to the cinematic domain; (3) “the phatic function”, designed to capture the audience’s attention; (4) “the referential function”, which provides clues about the plot, setting, or genre; (5) “the expressive function”, through which the filmmaker or production studio conveys an attitude or emotional stance; and finally, (6) “the appellative function”, which stimulates curiosity and encourages potential viewers to engage with the film.

In 2025, He (p. 104) argued that, by combining the theory of functional equivalence with the communicative functions of movie titles, the English translation of a film title should, at a macro level, achieve equivalence in four essential functions of the original: informational, expressive, aesthetic, and promotional. In

this way, the target audience is offered a cultural experience comparable to that of the source audience (He, 2025, p. 104). Building on this framework, the scholar applied the four functions to the analysis of English movie titles translated into Chinese. While Nord's typology is broad and applicable to any text type, He adapts these categories to the dual nature of film titles as both linguistic and commercial artifacts. Adopting the same model, our study examines how English movie titles are rendered into Romanian and French.

### ***2.1 Informational Equivalence***

As stated by He (2025, p. 104), In a movie title, information is key. It should point to the film's main content and act as a guide for the audience. The wording must be neither vague nor misleading, and without adding irrelevant details just for effect. A well-chosen title helps viewers grasp the essence of the film and decide if they want to see it. The same principle applies to translated titles, which should also guide the audience toward a correct understanding of the story.

### ***2.2 Expressive Equivalence***

Movie titles work much like article headlines: they give a compact sense of the story while also setting its emotional tone. Word choice, understood as formal or informal, positive or negative, signals the feelings behind the film. This is why, in translation, it's important to capture the original emotional tone rather than guess or alter it. Following the principle of functional equivalence, the translator's task is to recreate the emotions carried by the original title (He, 2025, p. 104).

### ***2.3 Aesthetic Equivalence***

According to He (2025, p. 106), aesthetic equivalence highlights the sensory pleasure that words themselves can offer. A well-crafted title can capture the audience's attention and evoke emotional resonance. While this quality is somewhat intangible, it remains identifiable. As the scholar notes, differences in linguistic structure between two different languages mean that beauty is expressed in different ways,

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requiring the translator to combine aesthetic sensitivity with strong translation skills.

Moreover, cultural distinctions also play an important role. Overall, Romanian film titles oscillate between tradition and collective memory, social realism, and an openness to globalization, while reflecting the dynamics of contemporary Romanian cultural identity. For example, titles such as *Capra cu trei iezi* (2022) [The goat and her three kids], *Moromeții* (1987, 2018) [The Moromete family], and *Amintiri din Epoca de Aur* (2009) [Tales from the Golden Age] draw on literature, folklore, and shared historical memory. Films like *Taximetriști* (2023) [Taxi drivers], *Soldații. Poveste din Ferentari* (2017) [Soldiers. A Story from Ferentari], *Poziția copilului* (2013) [Child's pose], and *Polițist, adjecțiv* (2009) [Police, adjective] point to everyday life and pressing social issues. At the same time, titles such as *Balanța* (1992) [The Oak], *Coborâm la prima* (2018) [Next stop, first station], *Hârtia va fi albastră* (2006) [The paper will be blue], and *Un pas în urma serafimilor* (2017) [One step behind the Seraphims] employ symbols and metaphors that suggest mood and theme rather than direct action. Finally, foreign titles like *Ana, Mon Amour* (2017) and *California Dreamin'* (2007), and *Miami Bici* (2020) reveal an openness to the global market and a tendency to retain bilingual or foreign-inspired titles for international visibility.

French film titles reveal a balance between fidelity to literary and historical traditions, sensitivity to social issues, and a global orientation, reflecting France's dual role as both a national and international cinematic force. For instance, films like *Les Trois Mousquetaires: D'Artagnan* (2023) [The three Musketeers: D'Artagnan], *La Princesse de Montpensier* (2010) [The princess of Montpensier], and *Les Aventures extraordinaires d'Adèle Blanc-Sec* (2010) [The extraordinary adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec] draw on classical literature and heritage. Social realism is present in titles such as *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (2014) [Two days, one night], *Jusqu'à la Garde* (2017) [Custody], and *120 Battements par Minute* (2017) [BPM (Beats per Minute)], which directly reference social concerns and collective experiences.

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At the same time, metaphorical and symbolic titles such as *Nocturama* (2016), *Anatomie d'une Chute* (2023) [Anatomy of a fall], and *La Bête dans la Jungle* (2023) [The beast in the Jungle] emphasize mood, atmosphere, and existential themes. Furthermore, global visibility plays an important role. Works like *Saint Laurent* (2014), or *Close* (2022) maintain internationally intelligible titles that resonate across languages.

American movie titles released in 2025 reveal cultural distinct strategies. Many emphasize franchise continuity, such as *Den of Thieves 2: Pantera*, *Captain America: Brave New World*, *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, and *Star Trek: Section 31*. Others use genre-marking titles, particularly in horror and thriller, with examples like *Wolf Man*, *Werewolf Game*, *The Devil and the Daylong Brothers*, *The Monkey*, and *The Woman in the Yard*. A third trend involves metaphorical naming, where films such as *Presence*, *Inheritance*, *Anatomy of a Fall*, *The Assessment*, and *Love Me* favour short, evocative titles. At the same time, colloquial, humorous, and ironic tones are common in comedies like *Kinda Pregnant*, *You're Cordially Invited*, *Good Bad Things*, and *Alexander and the Terrible*. Some titles are character-driven, centering on personal names: *Riley*, *Renner*, *Bob Trevino Likes It*, *Henry Danger: The Movie*. Finally, a strong action-thriller current conveys energy, danger, and resilience, as in *Flight Risk*, *Back in Action*, *Uppercut*, *The Accidental Getaway Driver*.

So, if we compare the three aesthetic tendencies, clear distinctions emerge. Romania tends to lean on identity and authenticity. France, by contrast, blends cultural prestige with universal reach, whereas, the USA thrives on marketability and audience segmentation, with one stream dominated by franchise-driven blockbusters and another defined by indie productions that use evocative, ironic, or experimental naming.

### 2.4 Promotional Equivalence

He (2025, p. 106) highlights one final aspect of functional translation: promotional equivalence. Since films carry not only cultural but also commercial value, their success depends heavily on effective promotion, and the title functions as the film's calling card. A memorable title, like a striking first impression,

draws attention and sparks curiosity. In this sense, the promotional function requires the title to operate as a persuasive tool for audiences.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a comparative qualitative research design grounded in translation studies and applied linguistics. It seeks to examine how American movie titles are translated into Romanian and French, using functional equivalence (Nida, 1964; 1986; He, 2025) as the main analytical framework. The four equivalence types: informational, expressive, aesthetic, and promotional, serve as the evaluative parameters for identifying translation strategies and cultural tendencies. The descriptive research combines textual analysis (semantic and pragmatic interpretation) with cross-cultural comparison (Romanian vs. French translation practices).

The corpus consists of twelve American films released between 1994 and 2016, selected based on their high levels of international recognition, and to represent different genres: drama, animation, thriller, romance, and musical. Data were collected from official film databases, national distributors, and streaming platforms to ensure the accuracy of Romanian and French title versions. Each film title was then back-translated and evaluated according to the four functional equivalence parameters. In addition to the four functional levels, semantic and pragmatic analyses are carried out for each translation.

The analysis aims to answer the following key questions:

1. What are the main differences between the Romanian and French approaches to translating the titles of American films, and how do these approaches balance the four functions of equivalence?
2. To what extent do these translation strategies reflect each country's broader cultural and cinematic tendencies as observed in their national movie naming conventions?

### **4. Comparative Case Study**

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Original title	Romanian translation	French translation (France)
1. <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i> (1994)	<i>Închisoarea Îngerilor</i> [The prison of angels]  Informational: reduced Expressive: strong Aesthetic: lyrical phrasing Promotional: emotionally appealing.	<i>Les Évadés</i> [The escapees]  Informational: partial Expressive: more literal. Aesthetic: straightforward Promotional: clear for audience expectations (prison escape).
2. <i>A Bug's Life</i> (1998)	<i>Aventuri la Firul Ierbii</i> [Adventures at grass level]  Informational: clarifies setting. Expressive: playful Aesthetic: metaphorical. Promotional: effective for family audience.	<i>1 001 Pattes</i> [1001 legs]  Informational: indirect, less about "life." Expressive: humorous Aesthetic: rhythmical Promotional: highly appealing
3. <i>Jeepers Creepers</i> (2001)	<i>Tenebre</i> [Darkness]  Informational: vague Expressive: ominous Aesthetic: too generic Promotional: effective in horror marketing but less distinctive	<i>Jeepers Creepers, le Chant du Diable</i> [Jeepers Creepers, the devil's song] Informational: enriched by "devil." Expressive: stronger, menacing. Aesthetic: balanced between original and adaptation Promotional: very effective in horror context
4. <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i> (2004)	<i>Strălucirea Eternă a Minții Neprihănite</i> [The eternal brilliance of the unblemished mind]  Informational: preserved Expressive: high	<i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i>  Informational: intact. Expressive: foreignizing

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	Aesthetic: elegant Promotional: artistically aligned	strategy Aesthetic: exotic Promotional: capitalizes on originality
5. <i>Cinderella Man</i> (2005)	<i>Renăscut din Cenușă</i> [Reborn from the ashes]  Informational: transformed Expressive: powerful Aesthetic: metaphorical Promotional: appealing for drama	<i>De l'Ombre à la Lumière</i> [From the shadows to the light]  Informational: transformed Expressive: hopeful Aesthetic: rhythmic Promotional: inspiring
6. <i>Happy Feet</i> (2006)	<i>Mumble, Cel mai Tare Dansator</i> [Mumble, the coolest dancer]  Informational: expanded Expressive: playful Aesthetic: colloquial Promotional: effective for children	<i>Happy Feet</i>  Informational: intact Expressive: foreign Aesthetic: catchy Promotional: relies on English global marketing
7. <i>Inception</i> (2010)	<i>Începutul</i> [The beginning]  Informational: partial Expressive: weaker Aesthetic: ordinary Promotional: less distinctive	<i>Inception</i>  Informational: ambiguous Expressive: mysterious Aesthetic: exotic Promotional: relies on English global marketing
8. <i>Moneyball</i> (2011)	<i>Arta de a Învinge</i> [The art of winning]  Informational: altered, avoids baseball jargon Expressive: inspirational Aesthetic: formal Promotional: effective for non-baseball cultures.	<i>Le Stratège</i> [The strategist]  Informational: adapted Expressive: pragmatic Aesthetic: concise Promotional: clear, marketable
9. <i>Silver Linings</i>	<i>Scenariu pentru Happy-End</i> [Script for a happy	<i>Happiness Therapy</i>

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<i>Playbook</i> (2012)	ending] Informational: transformed Expressive: uplifting Aesthetic: clear but lacks originality Promotional: appealing for romance	Informational: very free adaptation Expressive: catchy Aesthetic: slogan-like Promotional: highly effective
<i>10. As Above, So Below</i> (2014)	<i>Precum în Iad, aşa și pe Pământ</i> [As in hell, so on earth] Informational: transformed Expressive: dramatic Aesthetic: biblical cadence Promotional: strong in horror marketing	<i>Catacombe</i> [Catacombs] Informational: local Expressive: ominous Aesthetic: concise Promotional: very effective.
<i>11. Inside out</i> (2015)	<i>Întors pe Dos</i> [Turned upside down] Informational: partial, metaphorical Expressive: playful Aesthetic: catchy Promotional: appealing for families	<i>Vice-Versa</i> Informational: partial, metaphorical Expressive: playful Aesthetic: elegant Promotional: very effective.
<i>12. La La Land</i> (2016)	<i>Orașul Muzicii</i> [The city of music] Informational: clarifies for Romanian audience Expressive: less playful Aesthetic: plain Promotional: weaker, less glamorous	<i>La La Land</i> Informational: ambiguous Expressive: suggestive Aesthetic: exotic Promotional: relies on English global marketing

**Table 1: Comparative Translation of American Movie Titles into Romanian and French**

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As it can be seen, and as an overall observation of the above table, the tendencies that characterize each country's approach to naming national movies are largely preserved when translating American titles as well. Romanian translations frequently expand, clarify, or dramatize to ensure accessibility for local audiences, even at the risk of losing some of the subtlety or ambiguity of the original title. For example, *La La Land* becomes *Orașul Muzicii* [City of music]. By contrast, French translations tend to strike a balance between fidelity and marketability. In some cases, they adopt a foreignizing strategy, keeping the original English title intact, such as in the cases of *La La Land*, or *Inception*. However, in other cases they simplify or adapt creatively with catchy slogans that highlight audience appeal: *Happiness Therapy*, *Catacombes*.

Taken together, these strategies show that across both languages, the four types of equivalence: informational, expressive, aesthetic, and promotional, are negotiated in different ways, influenced by cultural norms, audience expectations, and the broader role each cinema plays in global cultural flows. We will now proceed to analyse these twelve examples by applying the framework of functional equivalence and taking into account the semantic and pragmatic effects of each translation.

**Example 1:** *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) - *Închisoarea Îngerilor* [The prison of angels] - *Les Évadés* [The escapees]

The original title combines the proper noun Shawshank, which refers to the prison setting, and the abstract concept of "redemption", which implies escape and spiritual renewal. The Romanian title shifts the emphasis away from redemption and toward a more vivid imagery. The informational equivalence is reduced because the concept of "redemption" is removed. However, the expressive and aesthetic values are enhanced by the use of a lyrical phrasing that expresses hope. From a promotional standpoint, the Romanian version is emotionally appealing and resonates with local audiences due to its metaphorical content.

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In contrast, the French translation prioritizes clarity by focusing solely on the act of escape. Here, informational equivalence is limited, with redemption replaced by a plot-driven reference, and expressive equivalence is more pragmatic. Aesthetically, the French version is simple, but it serves a clear promotional purpose by directly aligning with audience expectations of a prison break story.

**Example 2:** *A Bug's Life* (1998) - *Aventuri la Firul Ierbii* [Adventures at grass level] - *1001 Pattes* [1001 legs]

The Romanian choice dramatizes for children, emphasizing the viewpoint of small creatures. Informational equivalence is partially maintained because insects are implied, expressive equivalence is playful and child-friendly, aesthetic value is increased through vivid imagery, and promotional function is strong, appealing to families. The French version humorously exaggerates, resulting in a catchy bug name. The French name for a myriapod is normally “1000 pattes” but adding one more indicates that the bug is unadjusted. Informational equivalence is indirect but suggestive, expressive equivalence has a strong sense of humour, aesthetic function comes from rhythm and wordplay, and promotional function is excellent, ensuring memorability.

**Example 3:** *Jeepers Creepers* (2001) – *Tenebre* [Darkness] - *Jeepers Creepers, le Chant du Diable* [Jeepers Creepers, the devil's song]

The English title refers to a 1930s song that was popular in jazz culture as a light-hearted, uplifting tune. The title is an ironic twist, referring to the monster's eyes, which he steals from his victims. The Romanian title is reinterpreted, resulting in a weak informational equivalence because the song reference is lost. The expressive equivalence shifts to pure fear, the aesthetic quality becomes dramatic, and the promotional function appeals to horror stereotypes.

The French version retains the original phrase while clarifying with a dark connotational addition. Informational equivalence is greater than in Romanian. By including the word “Devil” the expressive value is increased, and the aesthetic effect

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combines foreign and local. The promotional power is derived from sensational framing.

**Example 4:** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)  
- *Strălucirea Eternă a Minții Neprihănite* [The eternal brilliance of the unblemished mind] - *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

The original takes inspiration from Alexander Pope's poem. In the original text, the phrase refers to the peace and joy that come from forgetfulness. A "spotless mind" is free of painful memories. The same concept is reflected in the film's plot, where the two main characters undergo medical procedures to erase their memories. The Romanian title is almost word-for-word. As a result, the four types of equivalence are strong and reflect the original intentions. The informational and expressive equivalence of the French title are also preserved by maintaining the original English form, while the promotional equivalence aims for global recognition.

**Example 5:** *Cinderella Man* (2005) - *Renăscut din Cenușă* [Reborn from the ashes] - *De l'ombre à la lumière* [From the shadows to the light]

The original title is more than just a reference to the fairy tale; it was actually used by sportswriter Damon Runyon to describe the film's protagonist, underdog boxer James J. Braddock. The Romanian metaphorical translation references the mythological bird Phoenix while shifting the imagery to resilience and rebirth. The French translation is also metaphorical, emphasizing the concepts of transformation and redemption. The French title, which is somewhat ambiguous, shifts the focus away from the character portrayed in the film and toward the idea of overcoming adversity.

**Example 6:** *Happy Feet* (2006) - *Mumble, Cel mai Tare Dansator* [Mumble, the coolest dancer] - *Happy Feet*

The idiom "happy feet" is upbeat and refers to a state of utter excitement and carefreeness, fitting the film's musical-comedy tone about a dancing penguin. The Romanian title is personalized by focusing on the main character's name and dancing abilities. In French, the title remains unchanged. This ensures the brand's global marketability.

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### **Example 7: *Inception* (2010) - Începutul [The beginning] - *Inception***

The noun “inception” literally means the beginning of something, or the act of initiating. In the film, however, it alludes to implanting an idea in the subconscious. Therefore, the meaning is layered, as it denotes both the starting point and the creation of an idea. In contrast, the Romanian translation narrows the meaning to the word’s initial listing in a dictionary. It simplifies and reduces the informational, expressive, and aesthetic equivalence. Once again, the French translation preserves the foreign identity and suggests global marketability.

### **Example 8: *Moneyball* (2011) – Arta de a Învinge [The art of winning] - *Le Stratège* [The strategist]**

The original title combines the word “money” with “ball,” highlighting both the financial struggle of the baseball team and the sport itself. In other words, the title captures the film’s central conflict between economics and the game. The Romanian translation shifts the focus semantically from the technical method to the outcome of success, making the title more appealing to a general audience. This strategy is applied because Romanian people do not have a culture of playing or understanding the rules of baseball. The French version highlights the main character and his role, presenting the film as a story of leadership.

### **Example 9: *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012) - *Scenariu pentru Happy-End* [Script for a happy ending] - *Happiness Therapy* [Happiness therapy]**

The title in English reflects the plot through metaphor, as it alludes to the idiom “every cloud has a silver lining” and the sports term “playbook”. Semantically, this points to the characters’ search for hope and emotional recovery but also at the protagonist’s obsession with football strategy. The Romanian version reduces the metaphorical richness by highlighting the optimistic outcome, making it more accessible to Romanian audiences. The French title emphasizes the psychological dimension of the story, semantically linking it to themes of healing. Both translations rely on adaptation strategies as they

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abandon the complex metaphor in favour of marketable expressions that resonate with international audiences.

**Example 10:** *As Above, So Below* (2014) - Precum în Iad, aşa și pe Pământ [As in hell, so on earth] - *Catacombes* [Catacombs]

In English, the title refers to the mystical phrase from Hermetic philosophy, which suggests an analogy between the spiritual and earthly worlds. Semantically, it creates a sense of duality, whereas pragmatically it indicates that the plot will explore the hidden connections between realms. The Romanian translation shifts the focus semantically toward damnation, making the horror theme more explicit. Although the phrasing taken from the "Our Father" prayer is "Precum în cer, aşa și pe pământ" ("Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"), this paraphrase emphasizes the theme of everlasting punishment. In contrast, the French title reduces the abstract metaphor to the physical location where the film takes place. This strategy ensures clarity for local audiences familiar with the Paris catacombs.

**Example 11:** *Inside Out* (2015) - *Întors pe Dos* [Turned upside down] - *Vice-Versa*

The literal meaning of the English title refers to something turned so that the inner part is exposed. Figuratively, it conveys the idea of intimate insight, and it epitomized the movie's general idea: the visualization of a child's internal emotional life projected outward. *Întors pe dos* means "turned upside down" or "reversed," suggesting confusion and disorder. Romanian speakers use this expression to refer to being in a bad mood or feeling under the weather. Thus, it sacrifices the metaphor of inner exploration, even though it preserves the sense of emotional confusion that defines the story. The French choice expresses reversal and opposition. The semantic focus is on switching perspectives between internal and external realities, and between different emotions competing for control.

**Example 12:** *La La Land* (2016) - *Orașul Muzicii* [The city of music] - *La La Land*

*La La Land* is an informal nickname for Los Angeles, the city of dreamers and the entertainment industry. The Romanian translation creates ambiguity, because in Europe, the city of

music would be considered Vienna, and in the USA, Nashville. Moreover, it no longer hints at the tension between fantasy and reality, and the musicality is only created by the word “music” itself. The French version keeps the English title unchanged. Since *La La Land* has no direct equivalent in French, retaining it preserves its cultural and metaphorical resonance.

## **5. Conclusion**

This comparative study of American film title translations into Romanian and French has revealed clear distinctions in linguistic strategy, cultural adaptation, and functional emphasis. By applying He's (2025) model of functional equivalence across informational, expressive, aesthetic, and promotional dimensions, the analysis demonstrated that translation choices are connected to cultural and cinematic identities. The following section addresses each research question, drawing on evidence from the corpus and the results of the comparative analysis.

1. What are the main differences between the Romanian and French approaches to translating the titles of American films, and how do these approaches balance the four functions of equivalence?

The Romanian approach to translating American movie titles is characterized by domestication and explicitation. Romanian translators tend to expand, clarify, or paraphrase titles to ensure that they are intelligible. This results in prioritizing informational and expressive equivalence. The translation becomes an interpretive act that reveals the content or mood of the film rather than preserving its stylistic or metaphorical subtleties. The aesthetic and promotional functions are secondary, often simplified to maintain comprehension.

In contrast, the French approach generally has an inclination toward foreignization and stylistic retention. French translators frequently preserve the English title, as it was seen in five out of the twelve selected examples, thereby maintaining its international recognizability. When adaptation occurs, it is usually elegant and concise. This tendency places greater

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emphasis on aesthetic and promotional equivalence, whereas informational content may be reduced.

2. To what extent do these translation strategies reflect each country's broader cultural and cinematic tendencies as observed in their national movie naming conventions?

These differences correspond closely to each country's broader cinematic and cultural orientation. Romanian cinema, as seen in its national titles, emphasizes authenticity, social realism, and cultural memory. The same values are reflected in its approach to translation, where communicative transparency and emotional intelligibility are prioritized. The result is a translation style that "speaks directly" to domestic audiences and reinforces national identity through accessible phrasing.

French cinema, by contrast, occupies a dual position as both a national and global film culture. Its titles often balance artistic heritage and universal appeal. Rather than over-explaining, French translators preserve the original artistic aura, relying on audiences' cultural literacy and the prestige of English as a global lingua franca. Consequently, the French approach is a blend of refinement, intellectualism, and cosmopolitan sensibility.

Overall, the two translation cultures exhibit complementary orientations: Romania seeks to "translate meaning" while France seeks to "translate identity." Both achieve functional adequacy, but through divergent priorities that reflect each country's historical relationship with language, culture, and cinema.

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